Jim Clark May 24, 2007

Words or partial words appearing in [ ] are ones that ***I*** put in to either clarify the thought (ie. [to]) or because I could not hear or understand what was on the tape (ie. [indecipherable]). Proper names that I could not verify the spelling of show up in red text.

NO – Norm Olson

JC – Jim Clark

NO -- Today is Thursday May 24, 2007, and it's about 10:30 in the morning. My guest this morning is Jim Clark and this interview is being conducted at the Fish & Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown. Jim is a retired Fish & Wildlife Service employee and lives in nearby Leesburg Virginia. Jim, I wonder if we could begin by having you tell us your full name -- and please spell it for us, when and where you were born and raised, and when and where you went to college and the degrees you received.

JC -- My name is Jim Clark. That's J I M C L A R K. Born and raised in War, West Virginia, that's W A R, seven miles to Cucumber. Went to school at Big Creek High School there in the town. And got my undergraduate degree in wildlife management at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, in 1974. I attended graduate school at West Virginia University, and got my master's degree in wildlife management in 1978.

NO -- Jim, after you got out of … or while you were in school perhaps, what was your first wildlife job that you had?

JC -- Well, I would say my first paid wildlife job was when I was at graduate school. I was hired by West Virginia Department of Natural Resources to conduct a woodcock banding study along the Ohio River, near Parkersburg, West Virginia. This was in conjunction with working on my master's theses, which was to analyze the population data collected of a cohort of woodcocks breeding in Canaan Valley, which eventually became Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. And it's interesting, because, this was back in 1976, my recommendation from that theses work was that that area be set aside as a national wildlife refuge. Now, it took 20 some years for that to happen, but today it's about a 20,000 acre, I

think, national wildlife refuge. So that was probably my first job - paid job. But ever since I was a kid, I loved nature. So that, you know, this interest in nature and outdoors started when I was very young -- probably before I was age 10.

NO -- What was … you started working for the federal government then, I guess, probably after you finished your master's degree?

JC -- That's correct. I started with the federal government in 1978. My first job was as a wildlife biologist with the Department of Navy. It was at Patuxent Naval Air Test Center in southern Maryland, in St. Mary's county. It was an air test center where they tested all these brand new aircraft. And they had 6,400 acres along the Chesapeake Bay and they hired me to set up a wildlife management program and environmental education program for the Naval Air Station. But I was actually, even though they had folks that worked in natural resource issues, I was actually the very first wildlife biologist that they hired. And it was a GS 7. And, to this day, it's one of the best jobs I ever had in my life, because I was sort of a token biologist, and all the naval personnel there loved nature -- whether it was through hunting, or fishing, or bird watching. So, I was a very popular guy there on the station, and really had the resources to get the job done -- all the support.

NO -- Excellent. Now, while you were there, is that when you taught at St. Mary's? Is that the same time?

JC -- Yeah, at the same time, I was also interested in teaching. I thought maybe after I got my master's degree I would pursue my PhD. And I actually had an offer from one of the professors to study the Kirtland's Warbler up in Michigan, for a doctorate. And just before I started that is when Patuxent gave me a call and invited me to come down, and they found the challenge of being a biologist down there, at the Naval Air Station. So, still interested in teaching, which would turn out to be a life long endeavor -- ending up at NCTC as the Chief of Wildlife Training for the Service -- I was hired by St. Mary's College, in Maryland, to teach evening courses in wildlife ecology, ornithology, and wildlife management. They actually gave me an office, and a budget. And had a grand time. And some of those students that took my training now work for the Fish & Wildlife Service -- Jane Putten down in Florida and John Gill who eventually ended up at Blackwater Wildlife Refuge. So that was fun.

NO -- So you were actually working at the naval base and then teaching at night?

JC -- What I tried to do was … is complement that. You know, the Navy loved the publicity. While I was there, I think every year we won the Navy's Environmental Stewardship Award. And my last year I received Department of Defense Conservationist of the Year Award, which was a big honor, because it was based on competition from all the military bases around the country. And I kept the little certificate with the signature from good old Casper Weinberger - that signed it. So I'm very proud of that, because, you don't think of the military as being resource oriented, but they have more than 20 million acres of land, and some of that land protects some species that are not found on national parks or national wildlife refuges. So it was good to be part of that community.

NO -- So the Department of Defense was pretty serious about its wildlife management program [indecipherable] and stuff?

JC -- Well, they could be. They could be serious about it sometimes, and other times they'd like to look the other way. But I had the advantage because we had such a successful program and it drew a lot of attention to the naval air base. Being so close to Washington, D.C., and the Pentagon, it was a place that the higher ups could come down and showcase, you know, compatible resource conservation with testing aircraft and fulfilling the mission of the military.

NO -- And you moved on from there, actually to another military facility, is that right?

JC -- Yeah. One of my dreams, ever since I was a kid, was to work with grizzly bears, and work in Alaska. All of a sudden an opportunity came up, I think this was in '81, where Fort Wainwright Army Base, situated outside of Fairbanks, about 900,000 acres, had a vacancy for a natural resource manager. And I took the bait, and got the job. And in December of '81 I started the journey up to Fairbanks, where I eventually settled in the little town called North Pole, Alaska. And I got there in the middle of the winter -- 20 / 30 below zero, my car wasn't working. The military offered me some free quarters for 90 days, but once I got there they changed their mind. So here I was, stuck in the middle of nowhere, with no

friends, nobody that I … no one that I really knew, and was almost ready the next day to turn around and drive back to Maryland and work for the Navy again. It was a two year assignment, where I would get … actually go back after two years. But I stuck it out. And if it wasn't for that trip to Alaska to work for the Army, I would not be with the Fish & Wildlife Service today.

NO -- Did you drive up actually?

JC -- Actually drove up. Yeah. I started out in December of '81 and got up there to report to duty early January '82.

NO – Did you come up the AlCan Highway?

JC -- No, I took the ferry system. So it was a wonderful three days of seeing the new territory. And actually overnighted in Tok, because my car broke down. Met some wonderful Park Service people -- or the Canadian version of the Park Service people, at Kluane National Park, who sort of took me under their wing for a day and took me around to see their national park. And they kept calling Maryland 'Merryland' which I thought was pretty interesting. And then I drove on into Fairbanks. But, eventually, after the first couple of months of getting adjusted to the cold, and to just a whole new way of living at that time, I became very comfortable with living in Fairbanks. So the only thing that got me was the darkness -- the cold was okay, but when that sun went down in the wintertime and barely would get above the horizon, that sort of worked on you a little bit, so …

NO -- Long dark days. Yeah.

JC – But [for?] three years I got to work on my childhood dream, which was to go out and tag grizzly bears and do a research project with grizzle bears. And actually …

NO – That would have been on the army base.

JC -- On the army base. It was on … it was with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. We used military helicopters, who needed the training to do this mountain-type terrain flight patterns, and went with, probably the number one bear biologist in the country -- Harry

Reynolds I think was his name, and went out as part of a team, to go out and tag the grizzly bears. And it was something I will never, ever, forget. It was an unbelievable experience. I mean, it's just … just something that will always be a pleasant memory for me.

NO -- Did you stay in North Pole? Live all that time in North Pole?

JC – Yeah, I stayed in a little, little community, in North Pole, off of Badger Road. It was a little log cabin -- three bedroom log cabin, which was beyond the means that I could afford, because, even at that time, it was pretty expensive living up there. But I made ends meet. And I actually got in with the University of Alaska, at Fairbanks, and was an instructor for them too. So, they hired me to teach ornithology, wildlife ecology, and wildlife management in the evening courses for their extension service. So I did that for three years. And, I actually taught at Fort Wainwright. So I did that in the evening, during those cold winter days … nights when I didn't have anything else to do. So …

NO -- Was there a difference between working for the Navy and working for the Army in terms of their wildlife management programs and resource management?

JC -- There was quite a difference. With the Navy I had the sense that they supported what I did. They would question things, but once they saw that what I was offering up would not conflict with the mission of the Navy, it was okay. But with the Army it was a little bit different up there. They were so far removed from prying eyes that they tried to get away with things. And really, a lot of times, they weren't interested. It would have been easy for me just to twiddle my thumbs and toes there in the office -- that they had to build for us in an old garage. We didn't have any office space. They had to build a little place with some plywood to separate us from the maintenance shop and the men's bathrooms. So, you can imagine the type of sounds and the fumes that we got working there. But we took our own initiative, and decided to work with the Fish & Game to promote the 900,000 acres as far as an example of an boreal forest that deserved to be protected, while at the same time, providing for the mission of the Army. So there were a lot of times when we kind of thought 'why are we here.' So …

NO -- You talk about 'why we were here.' There were other biologists working in the program with you or …?

JC – Yeah. I had one assistant. I had a technician. And then the military actually provided me with one fellow, named Steve Harrington, who would eventually work with me at Yukon Flats as a biological aid … or a seasonal aid. And he came in the office one day and said 'hey, I'm with the military, I'm here for two years, is there anything you can get me to do for you?' And so we worked up a deal where he was my assistant as well. And so he got out of all the rigors of whatever they were doing with the military, and got to put his background as a biological technician - that's were he went to school, he got a two year degree - he got to go out with us and help us tag bears; and do bird surveys; and we developed some parks -- some recreational parks -- on the reservation, on the military reservation. And I also developed a first class cross-country skiing area. I'd never done that before. And so we were tasked with doing that. And we went out and laid out this cross-country ski course that some well known skier tried it out and said it was world class. So I was pretty proud of that. But always, in the back of my mind, it was 'this is just a stepping stone to get into the Fish & Wildlife Service.' Because, ever since I was a kid, when I was like nine or 10 years old, I had the brochures about careers in Fish & Wildlife Service, and all the brochures about national wildlife refuges. And that was my goal -- I would dream about it. It would put me to sleep -- about working for the US Fish & Wildlife Service -- for $6,000 a year, and go out and band ducks. And there's one brochure that I had particularly that stays in my mind. It was this refuge manager putting up a sign … the front cover it was … put up a sign on a post at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. And it turned out, I met that manager, it was Irv McIntosh, and I meet him at Kanuti when he became the manager there. And I told him that he was a silent mentor of me, because I kept that and always looked and said 'I want that uniform. I want to be that guy, doing that, and taking care of our nation's wildlife heritage.'

NO -- You mentioned working with ADF&G -- Alaska Fish & Game -- while you were there. Who were the people you worked with?

JC – There were a couple that remember. One was Harry Reynolds, who was an extraordinary biologist, and a very, very fine fellow to work with. I mean, great sense of humor, willingness to help us with this program, even though we were not with the Fish & Game department. He relied on us -- not only for the helicopter support -- but for our

individual support -- to help grab the bears, and weighing them, and get to do all this fun stuff that you see on a Geographic special. And then there was a guy named Howard Golden that I worked a little bit with on trapping. And actually, worked with him when I eventually moved over to Yukon Flats Refuge. He did a lot of work on the furbearer populations on the Yukon Flats. But I think I met him sometime during my days at Fort Wainwright. Other than that I don't remember too many of them.

NO – Yeah, that's a name I remember.

JC – Yeah, he was a character.

NO -- [indecipherable] Yukon Flats days. Did you have any exposure to, or meet people that were, like, with BLM, or the Service, while you were working at Fort Wainwright?

JC – A little bit. Not as much. Most of it was related to the fire duties. Fire was a big issue up at that time. And the management of fire in Alaska was just evolving. It was actually to go put them out. And there was this change happening. And I came from a background where wildlife was always on my mind. And when I was a kid I was reading college level books on ecology. I mean, Leopold was my hero. Rachel Carson. Some of these other big name ecologists. I would read their studies, and their reports, and their books. And I always had this mindset that it was more than single species, or what I used to refer to as 'food-plot mentality' -- that's … you planted something they would be there. It was more to protecting the landscape -- the native landscape -- as it was, and to restore populations, and to take a bigger view. Well, when I moved from the Chesapeake Bay region to Alaska, I was in my element. Because there, you have to take a native ecosystem approach to whatever you do for management. You just don't put up a little bluebird box, or put a boundary fence around a piece of property, and think that you're doing good. And you certainly don't plant something in such a harsh environment. You work with the system. You identify how the system makes changes through freezing and thawing and fire and rain and snow and heat. And you work that way. And so, working with BLM was an exercise in understanding that there was an evolution occurring in fire management, where they always … when there was a puff of smoke they went out … they were intent to put it out. And, eventually, I would be part of an interagency fire management team, with the Fish

& Wildlife Service, that set the model for fire management in Alaska: where you let fires do their thing as long as it didn't affect cultural resources, human dwellings, and human safety -- human health and safety. So, yeah, there was a little bit of interaction with them.

NO -- Tell me about how you wound up applying for and working … getting that job at Yukon Flats.

JC – Well, that's interesting, because as soon as I got up to Alaska, I knew that I wasn't … I didn't want to stay there - at Wainwright. I wanted … it's interesting, when you work for the military -- you're working for engineers; when you work for the Fish & Wildlife Service -- the engineers work for you. That's how I used to compare it. And so it was always … with the military, although I enjoyed the experiences and a lot of the people who really had a sense of the environment and conservation, you still had this mindset that you had to justify everything you did, because they didn't … they weren't aware of ecology; they weren't aware of wildlife management techniques; they weren't aware of the importance of environmental education. And so, it was always trying to get them to catch up and understand why we were doing things. So there was an evolution that was occurring with that, as far as getting the military to understand. And the transition, when I went into the Fish & Wildlife Service, it was interesting, after two or three days my refuge manager -- Lou Swensen -- came up to me and said 'Jim, you don't have to justify these things anymore. You're not at the military.' And it was such a big relief and a release for me -- that suddenly I was within this collective community of like minds: that we understood ecology; we understood wildlife; and we loved it. We had a passion for this resource. And we would spend whatever amount of personal time and energy to protect something, that, not only did we want, but we wanted future generations to have.

NO – So, is this actually a job that appeared on the green sheet then and you applied for it?

JC – Yeah. Yeah. We had … actually we had a map … the staff -- my assistants and I -- had this big map of the United States, and there must have been 50 pins of where we put in for jobs with either the Fish & Wildlife Service … I was so desperate, I wanted to work for BLM, or Forest Service or Park Service. But I always wanted to work for the Fish & Wildlife Service. We kept getting interviewed, but being in Alaska, and budget costs of

moving people -- it wouldn't work. So, I saw these new positions that were being formed, for the Fish & Wildlife Service, called Fire Management Officers. And they were formed because of a major calamity that occurred down at Mirror Island. Two biologists were killed in a major fire that wasn't well planned out, or managed. And because of that, Congress appropriated lots of money to develop these fire management programs that would take more of a safe approach, and a biological approach, to managing and working with wildfires and natural fires. So, I was one of the first of four Fire Management Officers ever hired in Alaska. Now, when they interviewed me, they asked me what my qualifications were with fire, and I said 'well, here's my qualifications: I know how to strike a match; I know what a fire looks like; I understand fire's good; and I support fire management to restore native vegetation. And the only prescribed burn I ever did was with the Navy when I burned this 50 acre track of loblolly pine, and it got out of control. And, not only did the military come in, but all the local fire departments came in to put it out. Now, it was a safe fire. But all the smoke comes up, and all of sudden the Naval Air Station had to stop their flight operations. And so here I am with a little drip torch and all these people show up. But it was my supervisor that got the brunt of the criticism, I was exonerated from it. So …

NO -- Who is it that actually hired you for the job [indecipherable]?

JC – The person that hired me was actually Lou Swensen. At the time, there was a manager called Red Sheldon, who I distinctly remember was a big fellow with a beard, and when he would give presentations in Fairbanks I would go to them and would be just mesmerized by his tales. And I would go up and just tell him who I was. And he told me he said, you know, 'hang in there. Something's going to happen to you. You'll be fine.' And low and behold, he eventually moved to be a fire management supervisor – or, I forget what the titles were -- but he was overseeing the fire management program, I think, for Region 7 -- which was the Alaska region. But the guy that actually interviewed me was Lou Swensen. He turned out to be the Refuge Manager -- he was Assistant Manager at the time. And Lou interviewed me, and it was a very good interview. And just said he'd contact me, but if I was … if he was me, he would stay close to the phone, which is something I learned that when somebody says that -- a supervisor -- means you got the job. So, within a week or two the phone rang, and he said the job's yours if you want it. And I was ecstatic. I mean, here I finally got to be … and something I dreamed as a kid. I used to play like I was in Fish & Wildlife Service. Now, I didn't have to play anymore. And I knew that once I made that move, which was actually just moving … driving my car two miles to the Federal Building

in Fairbanks, that it would be something that I would stay with for the rest of my career. Which I did. And so the first day there, I was treated so nice. The staff at Yukon Flats just welcomed me like I'd been a long time colleague for years, and said 'you're with a different group now, you know, we're relying on your expertise and your knowledge and the things you learned to help us develop this Refuge.' Because, at the time, ANILCA had just been passed a few years ago, and so I got to go into a national wildlife refuge that was just established, that had major national / international implications to wildlife resources, and I got to be part of that program and that experience. But everybody that was coming into Alaska had that same opportunity. But unfortunately, a lot of those folks coming in had the mindset of the Lower 48. They didn't have this bigger thinking of an ecosystem. And so it was exciting to be part of that process, and to help folks understand that it was a different take on how you manage wildlife resources, or any natural resources, in an ecosystem approach.

NO -- Who was on the staff [indecipherable / blank spot in tape]

JC – Let's see if I remember. I know it was … Lou Swensen [b/s] was the guy that set me on my path with Fish & Wildlife Service. Scott McClain, who was a senior wildlife biologist -- who I loved working for. And not only did I work on fire management issues, I was the ecologists and the management officer for fire related issues. He knew that I loved ornithology, and birds, so he got me hooked up with his programs and waterfowl surveys. And I could talk later about some of that. And then there was a guy named Rich Barcelona who was the Assistant Manager that came in. And that was us -- along with an admin officer who I don't remember her name, but she was excellent. We had a great little group of folks. We were 135 miles from the national wildlife refuge, [b/s] but we had a great time there in the federal building.

NO -- Was Roger still on staff then -- Roger [can't hear]

JC – No. Roger …

NO -- He'd already gone…

JC – Yeah. Roger had already gone [b/s]; either left or he'd gone [b/s] and hooked up with the Artic National [indecipherable]

NO -- Oh, he went out to the Delta. He was actually out in Bethel for a few years before he [indecipherable]

JC – Yeah, he was gone by that time.

NO -- He was gone. Okay.

JC – I got a chance to meet him and talk with him. So … And now, Artic Refuge was on the third floor I think; we were on the second floor. Next door to us was the fisheries group. So you had this family of resource biologists and experts that were all together [at (?) {blank spot on tape}] Fairbanks, we were so isolated; it was nice to have this camaraderie, which I have never experienced since. Because we all lived in the same community, so, we socialized together. We had our Wednesday night basketball games, and we'd have cookouts at different people's places. It was really a sense of what I was looking for in my career: where you worked with resource issues; you worked with resource professionals; and you also played with them. And you were part of the family. You got to baby-sit their kids and things like that. It was a wonderful time -- challenging time but wonderful.

NO -- Kanuti was also [indecipherable]

JC – Kanuti Refuge was also there, and the Ecological Field Office for Fairbanks was there as well. And then you had [b/s] waterfowl [b/s] biologist -- Rod King. Was that his name?

NO -- King, yeah.

JC – Yeah, he was there. And I got to fly with him a couple of times. It was a hoot.

NO -- So you actually worked with the fire management program for all three refuges while you were there?

JC – Yeah. I was actually. Although I was stationed at Yukon Flats, I provided support to Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge and Artic. Artic didn't … wasn't something that required a lot of effort, because a lot of their land was on [north (?) b/s] side of the Brooks Range. Although they had a little bit of boreal forest that would burn on the south side. Now, they had primarily artic tundra type environment -- high mountain ele[vations (?) b/t]. Kanuti was a little different. And actually, it was a challenge to work with the manager there -- Irv McIntosh -- because he brought … he's the guy from Blackwater [(?) b/s] he's the guy that want … good example that came up [to (?) b/s] Alaska with Lower 48 ideas instead of [letting (?) b/s] fires burn he wanted to control them [(?) b/s] but he wanted [(?) b/s] acre track [(?) b/s]

End Tape 1

Start Tape 2

JC – … Artic National Wildlife Refuge, I was also to provide support in fire management to Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge, which is a little bit to the west of Yukon Flats, not as big as Yukon Flats or Artic. I think Yukon was 8.6 million, and the Artic was close to 19 and a half million or so. Kanuti, I think, was just a little over a million, if that amount. So it was one of the smaller refuges. But, Kanuti was an interesting situation because the manager there, who was Irv McIntosh -- the very first manager there, and he was the fellow on that cover that I used to look at when I was a kid on the careers brochure, he sort of didn't realize the type of management, the type of approach, you have to take on such a large tract of land. And he was sort of indicative of some of the other individuals that would come up without a full understanding of the ecology and ecosystem management. And one good example of that was fire management, where he was a little hesitant to let wildfires go. And wanting to do some controlled burning on that refuge, he would set out tracts of maybe 50 to 100 acres apiece. Whereas, we were looking at, on the Yukon Flats, managing tracks of land for fires for prescribed burning, or to restore natural fire - a natural fire regime to the area, we were looking at tracks of 10,000 to 50,000 acres in size. It wasn't uncommon on Yukon Flats to have fires from 50,000 to 100,000 acres in size. And the only thing that would actually put them out would be snow. It would burn the whole season. There was one in particular, I forget the name, it was around a really lovely mountain that was on

Yukon Flats, I forget the name of the fire, but it was a major conflagration of, I think, over 100,000 acres. And millions of dollars was spent on putting that fire out all summer by BLM. It wasn't near any village. And eventually, by September, the snow put it out.

NO -- That wasn't Bundik Lake [indecipherable]

JC – I don't know if it was Bundik. That sounds familiar, but I think there was another one a little bit to the west of that. So we had a challenge in trying to teach some of these managers that some of these fires, when you get up, in fact, you know, trying to teach them to understand that these fires were okay, as long as you protected the cabins, and the cultural resources, and the communities, some of these fires were okay to let burn. Because these systems had evolved with natural fires. And what had happened with the advent of the fire fighting programs up there -- with BLM, and maybe the state agencies -- was that fuels had built up to such a high level that you had these major fires. Of course, Yellowstone was the major one that people associate with 1988. But this was occurring all the time up in Alaska. So that was sort of a challenge, to get these people to understand, to let these fires go. And that … the one thing that hit me once on a major fire that we had on Yukon Flats, is I was flying out with the BLM fire management officer, who was a great individual -- he understood that some fires need to be let go, and as we got higher and higher above this fire, where the fire looked massive, the higher you got it looked like a little pin dot. And completely surrounded with hundreds of millions acres of land that would not be touched. And that sort of put things in perspective, that, yeah, this is not a bigger issue as you think it is. And, you know, folks in Fairbanks would complain that smoke was blocking the view of Denali National Park / Mt. McKinley. When in essence it only blocked the view maybe three to seven days out the year. So, most of the time it was rain clouds that was blocking the view. So it was very, very … how do I want to say … it was a lot of fun, and it was a big honor, to be part of this historical interagency fire management team that debated these issues on how to manage fires on public lands.

NO -- Now you mentioned it, in our … tale a little bit about the logistics … you mentioned being … stay… actually headquartered in Fairbanks. And the Refuge was a considerable distance away. You've got to fly to get into the Refuge, right?

JC – Oh, yeah. That was quite a change from my days of working on a small naval air station, where you get in the truck and within 10 minutes you're where you need to do your work, or your surveys. In Alaska, with the exception of Tok and Kenai, the refuges were all in the bush. For us in Fairbanks, it was two or three day planning just to go for an overflight. We had a pilot. We eventually had a pilot for our Refuge. And to go and do things in the summer, it took most of the winter to plan these logistical things out. Because you had to think about where these people were going to be dropped off to do waterfowl surveys, or whatever the project was. You had to think about food. You had to think about safety. You had to think about pick ups. And you had to think about weather. That was the big thing -- whether you could get out there or not. So you always had to pre-plan weeks in advance to go out. And I remember, just to go out and fly the length of the Refuge - the Yukon Flats Refuge - was a day or two in the making. Because, not only did you have to think of logistics, you also had to prepare the plane and get it ready as well. And 220 miles of the Yukon River flowed through the Yukon Flats, so, it would take you a day to go from one end to the other. And so you can imagine going out and staging in an area -- which we did for waterfowl surveys -- up to 10 to 14 days at a time.

NO -- The Refuge itself was how many acres?

JC – It was half the size of my home state of West Virginia, and so it was about 8.6 million acres.

NO -- Good sized piece of …

JC – Good piece. Yeah. And most of the focus was on the waterfowl resource. But, the one thing that I liked about the time that I was up there, that we were still discovering things. It was like you were an old-timey biologist going out, or naturalist, learning new things about stuff you'd never seen before. And I'm sure that there were times that I was out there, along with others, that there were places that we walked that nobody else had ever been to. And that was really wonderful, to have that feeling. That you're experiencing and seeing something that no one else, ever in the world, had ever seen. Even with the Native Americans that were out there, the Athabascans I think, they had the villages out there. I'm sure, some of those places, they had never been to. And so what happened with us out there Norm, is that we had such a great team of ecologists and biologists on staff, with only four of us, that we start looking into other things besides waterfowl. We were looking at the

furbearer populations. Of course, the moose and the wolf interactions. But we were looking at things like: shore bird staging areas. I was very interested in shore birds. So I was given the opportunity, during some of the waterfowl aerial surveys, to sit in the back and start counting the shore birds that I would see. And we found out that Yukon Flats, low and behold, is a major staging area for dowitchers, and yellow legs, and other types of shore birds, going to and from the Artic breeding grounds. And we also start looking into the neo-tropical migrants -- the songbirds. Looking into the effects of the old fires, and what type of vegetation was growing back, and things. So that was neat. Alaska gave biologist and refuge managers a chance to actually do pure biological surveys and research on those tracks of land. To this day they still do it.

NO -- There was a wildlife biologist, a state biologist, that was stationed at Fort Yukon, is that right, if I remember correctly -- Roy Nyland?

JC – Roy Nyland. That's right. I forgot all about him. He lived in Yukon Flats. Was very interested in, for good reason, the moose population dynamics, and the interactions with wolves. Because moose were a subsistence food for the Native Americans. It was a big deal in Alaska. And, at that time, aerial wolf hunting was allowed on portions of Alaska -- but not on refuges. And it was an issue as far as what type of effect wolves were having on the moose populations. And so Roy worked quite a bit with Scott McClain, who was a senior wildlife biologist, and they seemed to have a very healthy, working relationship, where they would pool their resources together to go out and do the winter moose surveys -- which I got a chance to do. I actually got to go up to a big bull moose and help put the collar on. And the one thing I remember distinctly is that the snow came up almost to your hips. We almost clipped a … we actually did clip a black spruce tree trying to land. So we almost crashed. We got out, and I went with Roy, and – it's snow and it's wonderful, and I'm taking pictures of Roy doing all these things -- and actually, that picture won an award in a Fish & Wildlife Service contest -- and we … I helped him get the moose set, and all that stuff, and were taking all the measurements. And we go back to the helicopter, about 100 yards away, on snowshoes, and he says 'Jim, I forgot to turn on the transmitter.' So, the moose is just getting ready to wake up, and he's shaking his antlers. And I say … you know, I got attacked by a grizzly bear when I was with the military, so, you know, this would be great, to get back and have another story to tell, and to survive it. So, I told Roy 'don't worry about it. Tell me what to do and I'll go back and do it.' And I did. And I tracked back, and I don't think … I don't know if Roy went with me, but I tracked back to the

moose, and the moose -- it's a big bull -- and he's shaking his antlers, and I was able to pull whatever it was I needed to do to get the transmitter to start. And we got back, and it was wonderful. And those are the things that you experience only in a situation like Alaska. Because they're so remote, and so isolated, and so much wilderness. It was amazing.

NO -- One of the things you did a lot of work with actually, while you were there, was waterfowl surveys. Is that right?

JC – Did a lot of waterfowl work. Yukon Fats, that we had found over years and years of banding, prior to the refuge, that the Yukon Flats, it's a big solar basin. Minnesota brags that they have 10,000 wetlands, land of 10,000 lakes -- natural lakes. Yukon Flats itself had more than 10,000 wetland. A variety of complexes that provided breeding, and molting, and staging areas, for the waterfowl there. And we're talking millions and millions -- at least two to three million waterfowl that bred there. And we're talking about pintails, and teal, and widgeon. And so the … a lot of effort was gone in, through the refuges, and the Fish & Wildlife Service's migratory bird program, to monitor and assess the breeding waterfowl populations there. And as an old duck person myself, although I love, like, all birds and all wildlife … other wildlife species, it was really wonderful to be able to spend your summers out there, to go do waterfowl surveys. We would fly these transects, look out the window, and count the number of waterfowl that we would see. Now, we also wanted to get an assessment of the breeding, of the production. So Scott McClain set up these production counts, where we would go out, they would drop us off, we would land on the lakes, would drop us off -- two on a team, about four teams, maybe -- and we would spend 10 days on, maybe a township -- 36 square miles -- and survey every wetland out there. Now, there's no trails, except what the bears and the moose leave. And we had these little rubber canoes that were terrible at first. We changed them to some 'rat canoes eventually, that was much more … easier to pull through the brushes. But, we would set up at base camp -- a couple of tents, maybe one tent -- with thousands and millions of mosquitoes surrounding you, and go out twice in the summer -- one early and one late -- to assess the production. And so we would do surveys -- one person would go one way around a lake, and the other person'd go the other way. And we would count the number of young, and the species of young. I mean, unbelievable type of work. I mean, it was like you're getting paid to play. Stuff that I'd dreamed of when I was a kid. The best part was in the later part … stages, in August, when the mosquitoes died down, the sun dipped below the horizon, the colors were turning -- and you didn't want to leave. It was 14 days out there of bliss. I mean, for biologists, it

was the perfect situation. And we'd go out there. Now, we had to deal with bears. And my assistant at the time was the guy that used to … the military guy that used to work for me -- Steve Harrington. I hired him as a biological aid, and so he spent the summers with me doing the waterfowl surveys. And he was deathly scared of bears. And we would … he would start these campfires that would smoke in the whole lake area to keep the bears away. 'Cause the bears would actually come up and sniff around the tents. We never encountered a grizzly, but we encountered several black bears.

NO -- Lots of black bears.

JC – One very agitated female -- a sow that we walked up, stumbled upon. We heard this black bear calling, it was bawling. It was in distress. It was up in a tree, and when we looked ahead of us, there was the big female, showing us her broadside -- which was a sign -- and she was chomping her jaws and moving her head back and forth. And we slowly but surely made out way back to the camp and got the heck out of there. But those are the things that … oh, it was just wonderful to be there.

NO – Now, the Service had some facilities actually, in the refuge. I remember there was a cabin in Fort Yukon. Is that right?

JC – We had … yeah, actually, we had a cabin there, that part … my first two weeks on the Yukon Flats as fire management officer was to spend time out there rehabbing the cabin.

NO – You did?

JC – So, not only were you …

NO – It had [indecipherable / overlapping voices] burned, right?

JC – It had been burned, and we were restoring it, and we stayed there - we slept inside, and then during the day - there was an engineer -- I think his name was Rudy -- would come up with Lou Swensen and myself, and I got quite an education on how Fish & Wildlife Service operates. Because you don't only work with binoculars and statistics; you use your hands and a hammer and nails to get the job done; is what we did. I learned a lot that way. We

also had … not only did we have that cabin in Fort Yukon, we also had this wonderful little cabin on Canvasback Lake. Now, the lake itself … the area surrounding -- about 6,000 acres I'd say -- it was worthy of separate national wildlife refuge status in Lower 48. It was the most beautiful boreal forest lake I'd ever seen in my life. And it was massive. And we had a small cabin there that nobody hesitated to go to, because you would fly in and the plane would come right up - float plane would come right up to the dock there, or the shore, and just walk a few feet and you're at this cabin with beautiful views. And I remember once with … being there with Rod King. We were inside eating - we had just done a waterfowl survey - and all of a sudden the whole cabin's shaking. I mean, it's bumping … it's bumping. And he said 'you know, I think there's a red squirrel out there.' Now, I don't know if he was kidding or not, but I looked at him and I said 'Rod, that's the biggest red squirrel I've ever seen.' And it was a black bear that was scratching itself on the side of the cabin. So we went out and shooed it and it walked away. Occasionally a grizzly bear would show up, and moose. But you could get off on a canoe and just canoe around this beautiful lake and see all types of waterfowl, and shore birds, and stuff. So, that helped us do some staging, as well.

NO -- You mentioned one of the people that you worked with at the Flats was Rich Barcelona. Who, as I remember correctly, had an unfortunate accident actually out on one of these survey trips? Is that right?

JC – Yeah. Rich had moved up from one of the regions in Lower 48, I want to say Denver or Albuquerque, and he came out as Assistant Manager. About the same time I moved up there, he came in as Assistant Manager. And it was an interesting situation I usually went out even though I was the Fire Management Officer they knew that my heart was not some much in the fire, but in the wildlife -- the wildlife surveys and all that. My goal was eventually to become wildlife biologist on a refuge, or a manager. I wanted to get in the manager series. Well, I was going out and doing the surveys with Scott, or for Scott, and I had some surgery scheduled one week where I was going to be … I could not fly. The doctor says you can't fly; you've got to go though recovery. And so we didn't know what to do. And I remember distinctly Rich coming from his office and coming over to me and looking over my partition, and he says 'don't worry, buddy, I'll take care of you. I'll go do it for you.' 'Cause I was worried about it, you know, these folks are dedicated to doing … getting the job done. So the next day, Rich goes out on the survey with Pat Haglan, who was actually doing some of the research. And I was supposed to go out with her, but Rich

said 'I'll go.' So that was great. So I could go have my surgery. And so Rich flew out there with Pat. And, what I remember, is that they went out to do their waterfowl survey, and of course Rich went one way and Pat went the other way. And when Pat came to where they should meet she didn't see anything. But maybe the boat was floating upside down -- I'm not … I don't remember. But there was no Rich. And so I remember getting … at the time we didn't have cell phones, it was two-way radio type of thing, and she called in a 'mayday.' Scott always, during the summer, always had a two-way radio set up at his house, and we were required to call in every night. Now, sometimes reception was good, sometimes not. But the purpose was to let them know that all was 'okay' or 'we need assistance.' And he would check in at least two or three times a day. Safety was always first. And I was actually the safety officer for the refuge. And so, Rich had his safety gear. Now, whether he wore it or not -- that was his call, because nobody would see him. So I don't know what the situation was there. But, Rich was missing. And we knew something was wrong. I wasn't allowed to go out there, but I coordinated the rescue efforts. We had a couple of airplanes that flew out. And it took us three days to find Rich. I think Lou, Scott, and some other folks, were dragging the lake, and after three days they found him. And it really hit us hard -- especially the Yukon Flats family. We were a tight knit group, with not only the full time staff, but the temporary staff, that I still maintain contact with today. And the thing the really was … that hurt the most, was Rich had just … he and his wife had just had a baby. I think it was a little girl, six months old, was only six months old. And Lou was very despondent. And I loved Lou to death. Lou had a hard time dealing with this issue. And this is when I stepped up to the plate, and I told Lou 'don't worry about it, I'll take care of it for you, but you got to go with me.' Now, this is when Rich was first reported missing. We decided not to let Cindy know, his wife, until the morning. We wanted her to get at least one nights sleep. And so, the next morning, before sunrise, which of course in summer wasn't a sunrise, but we got there and knocked on the trailer. And Lou was behind me, and he was taking it hard. And Cindy opened the door and she knew something was wrong. And I said 'Cindy, I'm here to tell you that Rich is missing.' And, I had never done that before. And I told her we didn't know where he was at, and we know he's at this lake, we're looking for him. And it was really something that changed me forever as far as … you know, I don't know how to explain it, but it changed the way I look at people, how I deal with safety issues. I mean, I was very safe then, but knowing that she had two little kids … her mother-in-law was there. She had just arrived the day before to see the grandchild. So she's there. And so for three days they had to deal with the issue of Rich. And I saw Cindy get very mad, sad, worry. I mean, she was blaming me. I wasn't even out there. I saw her go through all the stages, and I was there for her. I let her beat me

up if she wanted to. And eventually, after we found Rich, she sort of came to terms with it. And I think she was very appreciative that we were always there for her. And that's the one thing I always remember about the Fish & Wildlife Service, is that we're always there for our people. And it was a big family, and that further solidified that idea for me, that that's what the Service was about. And an inquiry was made. And I don't really know what was finally determined, but we seemed to think that maybe he lost his balance in the boat, maybe he had finished his part of the survey … and Rich was loosing a lot of weight. He and I were both very competitive 'cause we both got into running. I'd lost like, 30 / 40 pounds. He'd lost something like 60 pounds, and became obsessed with it. And so we're not sure if he got tired, 'cause he would count his calories. Every day he would count his calories. And maybe he laid down and the boat shifted, because when they found him, he was in this position. Like he was trying to hold onto the boat, to save it, and trying to get to the shore. We're not sure -- what happened. I don't know if somebody else had talked about it, but … I remember going through the inquiry, the investigation, with Joe Mezzoni and others from the Regional Office, they came up to the Fairbanks Office and interviewed everybody. And no fault was found, except that, you know, it would be up to the individual to wear the vest. And I don't think that … I don't know if Rich had the vest on or not, which certainly would have helped him. So, that changed us a lot. There was a lot of tears; a lot of worry. But, you know, we got through it. And eventually, within a few months, they put me in Rich's job as Assistant Manager. It was unfortunate it came to that, but that's how I got into the management series.

NO -- If I remember correctly, you wrote a nice article about Rich, which appeared in *Reflections*, the regional office newspaper.

JC – Yeah. Yeah. I did. I was doing a lot of writing anyway. I love to do nature writing. And I got … was really getting into photography -- nature photography. And again, I wanted to show Lou that I was there for him. And I offered to write up, not only in *Reflections,* but also I wrote a piece in our annual narrative report, there's always something in the back you write for these reports that refuges did every year. And so I wrote a large, lengthy piece about Rich, and his life, and what he meant to me, and all that. And the dreams he had. And I always wanted to make sure that somehow, his kids would know what their dad was like. And I guess they're 20-some years old now. They'd be at least 20 years old. So, I don't know if … you know, I never heard back from Cindy, except one time. She called after she moved out of Alaska. And I never heard from her again. And

it's interesting that Rich's overall goal was to eventually become the Project Leader at Bosque del Apache, which would become a major part of my life. Because I would be the Regional Biologist eventually at … in Region 2, and I worked side by side with the folks at Bosque. And a few years after that, when I was at NCTC, I was the photographer for their migratory bird festival - every year, or their crane festival every year, that they have down there. So, I could see why he wanted to go down there, 'cause it's a beautiful place.

NO -- Yeah. In fact, speaking of Rich, there's a plaque out here for some … Fallen Comrades Memorial, that commemorates his life and …

JC – There's three people on that Wall that I worked with. And one … It's interesting Norm, one, you know, you have Rich there from the Yukon Flats. And there was a guy named Steve -- I forget his last name, but he took over as Assistant Manager there -- and he died in a plane crash on Yukon Flats. So, it was interesting.

NO -- While you were at Yukon Flats, I can remember back that you were involved a little bit, sort of a minimal amount, in putting the Comprehensive Conservation Plan together. You were involved in some of the meetings that we had early in the process. One we had at Rabbit Creek Inn, down in Anchorage, where we were looking at alternatives and all. Do you have any remembrances about those meetings? Of anything that was involved?

JC – Well, it was something that was intimidating. I mean, to think about the challenge that you have with developing … it was required by ANILCA to have these Comprehensive Conservation Plans, and you were going to be part of that. Again, it was exiting at one time, but boy the pressure that you would have. Because they were relying on your experience, your expertise, and skills, to come up with some alternatives to managing these refuges. Knowing that everybody else in the world considers themselves an expert. So everybody at these [indecipherable] meetings had their own ideas -- some of them selfish, some of them not -- about how refuges should be managed. But here I was, part of a team, including Regional Office folks, to develop these scenarios of how Yukon Flats should be managed for future generations. Now, you always had to have in the back of your mind that you had these purposes for which the refuge was established, and you couldn't go, you know, you couldn't undercut those. But it was fun. It was challenging. it was frustrating. Because at

that time, politically, wilderness designations wasn't looked upon very highly. And I remember distinctly once, and it might have been at Rabbit Creek, that Scott was looking at the maps, and he was very quiet. And he kept looking at those maps. Everybody's talking about all these management scenarios. And Scott just finally said 'you know, I don't know why olive refuge … that refuge is not designated wilderness.' And it was total silence in the room, like, you know, some people thinking 'you know, he's got a point there.' And the other ones probably thinking 'you got to be crazy to think that.' But the main focus on wilderness up there was the high mountain tops, 'cause it was so pretty. But down in the valley you had this major, major river -- the Yukon Flats -- with all the watersheds draining into it, that deserve protection -- even though it wasn't beautiful wilderness. Because, actually, the boreal forest is not some place you want to go visit with your family for a picnic. I can tell you that. It's not easy to traverse through it, or live in it. It was worthy of protection; just protect that whole system of watersheds, and ecological communities, that provided an international resource of waterfowl, shore birds; providing protection for Alaska for water resources, and water quality. And he struck up on something that caused quite a debate throughout the system, I think. And it was Scott that did that. It was nobody else. He's the one that brought it up. And I became of big hero of his … I mean, I thought he was … I mean, he was a big hero of mine. He … when he said that I's thinking 'I've been waiting for a year for somebody to say something like that.' And so the Regional Office folks were just totally against it. But then Lou caught on; and I think Rich was there at the time, he caught on. And we fought as long as we could to say, you know, the whole refuge is worthy of wilderness designation. And Scott … what I liked about Scott was that he had this perspective of an ecological … of ecology, that when you tug at a single strand of nature -- what John Muir said -- it affects the whole web; you know, you touch the whole world. And he had that for a long time, and really had to struggle with the upper level management to get that theory across, or that concept across.

NO -- I think we did wind up in the plans we did, in our range of alternatives, we did have an alternative that basically proposed making the entire refuge wilderness. And it was kind of at one end of the spectrum. 'Cause it did all qualify. But that's not exactly what the Washington folks thought should be the case

JC – And I left before the plan was completed; I transferred down to Texas at the time. But working with the Regional Office folks, and finally getting a voice, you know … the way I

operate is I usually take a year before I speak up on something, until I'm well versed in the issues, and got my feet wet. And it was neat to get these different perspectives -- of the caribou biologist, or waterfowl experts, or the archaeologists -- about what was the resource values for that particular refuge. Knowing very well that you still had to consider the system too. you know, the whole gamut of the national wildlife refuge system. We weren't just a separate little entity. We had to think of everything, and how it was all connected. So …

NO -- I think we, in the end, the only thing we got Washington to agree to, and it appeared in our preferred alternatives, in the end, was the designation of the White Mountains -- that strip along the White Mountains, on the southern edge of the refuge.

JC – I don't remember that.

NO -- That was a wilderness proposal, but that's as far as it really went.

[overlapping voices / indecipherable]

NO -- I remember we made a few visits actually, to villages, for various views – advisory … fish and game advisory planning meetings, and that sort of thing. Did you get to spend a lot of time in the villages?

JC – Yeah, in a couple of capacities. One was with the planning of the … Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Planning. That was … involved going out to some of the villages. And then also, when I was Assistant Manager, I did some environmental education, which was a lot of fun, with the Native kids -- Native American kids. And then also, with the fire management program, Lou and I would go out a couple of times. And one thing that, you know, I was talking about these folks coming up from the Lower 48 with Lower 48 perspectives and concepts, one thing that we really needed to learn was the culture of the people that live Alaska. And we did take some training in communications with Native Americans up there. But I don't think it was nearly enough. And the reason I say that is, immediately when I was hired by Lou for the Refuge, within a week I'm out there at a

public hearing, with Lou and some others. I think, actually you and Mike Evens might have been there, the first time. And it was … I mean, I was totally intimidated, 'cause I had no idea how to react. And it was primarily for me to watch and listen. A few questions were thrown my way. But it was an interesting exercise because of the way they communicate. These individuals, these folks, would not say much in an organized forum. And so Lou just said 'now, wait, watch what happens.' This is after the meeting was over, and we stayed there all day, and I'm thinking 'why aren't we getting back on the plane.' People would filter in and start providing input. And that's how they communicated. And so you had to give these people time. We're so used, in our culture, of fast talking -- even before MTV. Fast talking; get the moment out; interrupt; which we still do today. Whereas, these people wanted to absorb the information, and then think about it, and then maybe bring up a word or two. And maybe come back. And a lot of times in the fire management planning, when we had the meetings, Lou and I would sit there and give out the information about what we were looking at doing and want feedback, there wouldn't be any responses. And everybody would clear out of the meeting room, which was used as a schoolhouse, or I think it was something like that. And then within an hour or two, we'd be sitting there, people would start coming in. And they'd come up and 'hey, Jim, let me show you this.' You know, and I felt really good because they were providing me with helpful information; they were getting engaged; and they would show me where some cabins were, a particular trail; you might want to think about a controlled burn over here. And so that was the fun part. Now, there were other times when you'd go to a village and you didn't know whether the village was sober or not, because that was a big issue. And sometimes a person would come out to the plane and say 'there's no reason being here today, turn the plane around and go back.' And I know that happened at least once with me. And I was sort of threatened once out there by an individual, and it kind of ruined my whole day, and I decided that this wasn't worth it. And I walked back to the school where we were sleeping -- we'd sleep on the floor of the school -- and I didn't … I think you were there, I didn't attend that meeting. And I went back, it was after about two weeks with the Service, 'cause I wasn't well trained or prepared, I went back and told Lou that I was devastated. And he actually apologized, that he should never have sent me out there with just you and Mike, because I was so new to the refuges and to the system and the issues. That he should have been out there instead of me. So I appreciated that. But, eventually, it became more and more comfortable going out. Some villages you enjoyed going to; others you did look quite forward to going to.

NO – Oh, yeah. That was always the case. What was the attitude of the local folks regarding fire?

JC – Well, it was interesting, because there's some folks that understood it, and some of them didn't. But a lot of them saw it as a money source. I mean, a lot of the fire fighting crews came from the Native American villages. So BLM had this, I think they had this unwritten rule that if there was a fire near a village, you never hired folks from that village -- because you didn't know whether they set the fire there or not. So you always went 50 or 60 miles away, to the next village, to get that group to come in and fight the fire. I distinctly remember the guy telling me that. Others, they liked the fires. Others didn't. So, it was not different from what we were dealing with, with the interagency fire management team -- where some wanted fires completely put out, and others didn't. Their big issue was that they wanted to make sure they had the moose, because that was their sustenance. They had to have moose. They had to be able to get out there and shoot it. The bigger issue was the wolf issue. Now, I never got fully engaged in the wolf issue, but it was a big deal at Yukon Flats.

NO – Well, I guess with the fire … thinking about the succession that … that early stage succession growth, really, after fires is good moose habitat. Lots of stuff to eat.

JC – In fact, I remember Stieglitz, who was the Regional Director maybe, at the time, flew out and to look at a … the damage, or the disaster, of a major fire we had out there. And when they were flying out there the fire weed immediately started popping up, and there were moose right at the edge -- feeding. Like, they couldn't wait, 'cause it was like a box of cracker jacks on the other side of the fire line, to go in and eat. And I think that changed his perspective, that, you know, maybe were taking this out of context, putting out all these fires. But you're right, it … the animals were not affected. They … in fact, in some of the studies over there at Yukon Flats, the moose that were radio collared were inside the burn areas – immediately – feeding.

NO -- Good habitat for them. You wound up leaving Alaska. Where did you go, and why did you decide to leave Alaska, in fact?

JC – Well, there were personal issues. Living in Alaska is rough, on a family, on … you know, if you're not used to it, or if your family's not used to it. But I left on personal reasons. Plus, I wanted to go back down to Lower 48, and I wanted to get in managing a typical national wildlife refuge, which I never did - in my whole career. So I had an opportunity of going down to Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge, a sub-unit of Aransas, which is where the whooping cranes are. And they wanted somebody to go out to the island, which was about a 12 mile boat ride off the coast of Texas, to live out there and set up a new national wildlife refuge. Now, Matagorda Island was 50,000 acre, coastal barrier island. Home to about 30 or so of the wintering whooping cranes that came down. But, unbelievable diversity out there. There was shore birds. Endangered species sea turtles. In the spring the mesquite trees would be full of colorful songbirds -- it looks like Christmas trees with ornaments -- Baltimore Orioles and Scarlet Tanagers and Grosbeaks coming in. They would use it as a staging area before they would go across the Gulf, to go up to their northern breeding grounds. So I was given the task of going out there and setting up a national wildlife refuge; to look at what the resource values were; to develop a management plan that encompassed the whole islands. It was one of the very first ecosystem approach plans ever done outside of Alaska. And I'm very proud of that, because I actually wrote that thing. And secondly: look at this little bitty issue called cattle grazing, that had been going on for 135 years. And when the Refuge Manager called me and said 'now, there's one issue that you need to get really … bone up on is whether cattle grazing is good out there or not.' Well, I knew immediately, since it's a barrier island, it's very sensitive to disturbance. And that no major grazers -- except grasshoppers -- ever occurred out there. That there was going to be a contentious issue. And so for three years I lived on that island. I would leave the island maybe once a week or every two or three weeks to go get provisions. And a steady stream of high rollers would come out there, from the press to the governor, to senators and congressmen from D.C., would fly out to the island, and I would take them on these tours. And so, I had a small staff: I had two refuge employees -- a maintenance worker and a biological aid; and then I had three conservancy folks that worked for me -- a cook, a maintenance guy, and a barge operator that would barge all of our supplies over, and vehicles and stuff. And so I managed this program. And I absolutely loved it -- I mean, rosette spoonbills, reddish egrets, millions of shore birds. I got married out there. My wife, Jamie, and I got married out there one day. And she …

after we got married, we took a group bird watching -- that's immediately what we did after we got married. And a day later she had to go back to D.C. to work. And we lived apart for the first year. But I, slowly but surely, started investigating this issue of cattle grazing on that island, and found out that there was nothing that the cattle were adding to the island. The state was really intent on managing the island as a private hunting preserve for about 50 people. They were spending an inordinate amount of money to get 50 people a year to go out there and hunt deer and quail and turkey. All three of which were not major players on that ecosystem. The quail and the turkey, I think, were released. The deer … they were not … I mean, they were sized … after coming from Alaska, they looked like German Shepherds walking out there, they were so small. And so what I started doing is cultivating this perspective, this concept, of managing the island as a whole system. And to get away with this artificial nesting structures that the turkeys had to sit on at night in order to be protected. They had these structures that they could roost on, otherwise the coyotes would eat them. Not to worry about quail. And to think about that there were more people wanting to go out there and experience barrier islands, than people that wanted to go out there and hunt. So you had to boat over. And the public only had a couple of opportunities a year to come out to the lower half of the refuge. And the northern half was managed by the state; the southern half was managed by the Fish & Wildlife Service. So I had to work cooperatively with these … what I call 'hook and bullet' type biologists, from the Texas Parks and Wildlife, whose only concern was deer quail and turkey. They didn't care about piping plovers, or what they called 'little brown jobbers' which were songbirds. Now, they didn't care about the processes that were occurring out there naturally. But. I wrote this little memo, that finally summarized that the cattle should be removed. And it became a national issue: that my recommendation was elevated all the way up to the Washington Office. I remember Don Berry, at the time was with the House Fisheries … what was that House Wildlife Resources Committee, I forgot what the name of it was, but he came out there; Congressman Shays came out there; I think it was Wilson from North Carolina staff came out there. And I would take them out there and I'd say 'let me show you the difference between active management and passive management.' And the … every time they saw what was we were doing on south side, they knew that what we were doing was right. That you did not have to manage the resources out there like they were doing on the north side. They were mowing this native grassland down to stubble. And the cranes weren't using it. Nothing else was using it. And if you come back to the south side, where we had this native blue grass prairies finally getting restored, the sand hill cranes were coming in. You had all these songbirds out there -- using it. It was a native system that was actually managing itself. Well, the memo finally got to be a major compatibility statement,

which further defined the compatibility steps that you go through on a national wildlife refuges. And to this day, in management training at NCTC, they always go back to the issue of Matagorda Island, is where this new compatibility training started. That's what I did. and so, eventually, the final decision was given to the Director of the Fish & Wildlife Service, actually it was given, delegated to the Deputy Director, who was Dick Smith at the time. And Dick agreed with me, although he did tell me, on the last day of his employment with Fish & Wildlife Service before he retired, that it was the hardest decision he ever made. But it was the right one. And that … you don't know how much I loved hearing that. Because, my name was raked through the mud by -- not only the state folks -- but some folks that were from the old school in the Fish & Wildlife Service. That cattle would heal everything -- including major diseases that humans have. I mean, cattle did everything for everybody. And I went out to prove that: no, cattle aren't the cure all to end all for everything -- especially in resource management. Cattle were finally removed. And, low and behold, the island's still there; it didn't sink, it didn't get destroyed. And it's a naturally functioning ecosystem now. So, I was very proud of that.

NO – Good. That's quite an accomplishment. Well, Jim, I know you've got to take off now, and meet some friends here, and have lunch over in the Commons -- in the Dining Hall. I think we've still go lots of things we can talk about -- including the point where our paths crossed again in Washington, D.C., for Refuges 2003.

JC – And the refuge academy latter on.

NO -- And the refuge academy. So, maybe we could have you back at some point. We can get together and sort of finish this interview at a latter date. Would [] be to do that?

JC – Would love to do that.

NO – Okay. We'll plan on doing that then. And maybe we can get Gerard back, and a few other people, and talk about Refuges 2003 -- which would make a good tape by itself. [indecipherable] I want to thank you for stopping this morning

and spending some time with me. and I'm sure … I apologize for the fact that we had that break in our tape, and something went wrong with the camera, but I think we've got about 46 minutes on this tape. And I think we probably had 20 / 25 / 30 minutes on the first tape. So we'll be able to put together a good interview. And we'll complete it at a later date then.

JC – Sounds good.

NO – Yeah. Thanks a lot Jim.

JC – Thank you.